DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 260 CE 080 868

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TITLE Slavery in America: A Thematic Unit Appropriate for Adult Literacy Classrooms. Teacher to Teacher.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Literacy Resource Center, Kent.
PUB DATE 2000-10-00
NOTE 13p.
CONTRACT OLRC-039-300-024
AVAILABLE FROM Ohio Literacy Resource Center, Research 1, 1100 Summit St., P.O. Box 5190, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242-0001. Tel: 800-765-2897 (Toll Free); Tel: 330-672-2007; Fax: 330-672-4841; e-mail: olrc@literacy.kent.edu; Web site: http://literacy.kent.edu. For full text: http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/0300-24.pdf.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult Students; Behavioral Objectives; *Black History; Black Studies; *Civil War (United States); Computer Literacy; Educational Strategies; High Interest Low Vocabulary Books; High School Equivalency Programs; Instructional Materials; Learning Activities; Listening Skills; *Literacy Education; Reading Comprehension; Reading Materials; *Reading Skills; Remedial Reading; *Slavery; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

This thematic unit is designed for adult literacy students with at least a third grade reading level. Objectives are tied closely to skills needed for the General Educational Development tests and include computer and workplace skills. Equipped for the Future (EFF) roles and skills are also integrated into the plans. Best practice teaching strategies are used to engage learners in authentic learning as well as to build motivation and interest. Although the lessons are based on African American history, the strategies learned can foster discussions involving present-day issues. Components of each of the six lessons are description; learning objectives; EFF skills and topics; and learning activity. The description indicates which trade books are required reading for that lesson. Handouts are appended. A two-page matrix lists 39 Civil War and slavery books alphabetically by author's last name. The matrix provides this information for each book: author(s), title, type (picture book, young adult book, biography, fiction, nonfiction), difficulty (easy, medium, difficult), setting, heroes (yes/no), slavery (yes/no), Civil War (yes/no), abolition (yes/no), underground railroad (yes/no), and other (other topic, other type of book, special feature). (YLB)

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ED 446 260

Teacher to Teacher October 2000

Slavery in America: A Thematic Unit Appropriate for Adult Literacy Classrooms

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CE080868

039-300-024

October 2000

Ohio Literacy Resource Center

Enhancing Adult Literacy in Ohio

Teacher to Teacher

Slavery in America

A Thematic Unit Appropriate for Adult Literacy Classrooms

By: Lisa White

The following thematic unit was designed for adult literacy students with at least a 3rd grade reading level. Objectives are tied closely to skills needed for the G.E.D. and include computer and workplace skills. Best Practice teaching strategies are utilized to engage learners in authentic learning as well as build motivation and interest. Although the lessons are based on African American history, the strategies learned can foster discussions involving present-day issues. Equipped for the Future (EFF) roles and skills were also integrated into the plans.

The OLRC Reading Group reviewed all trade books used in this unit. Summaries of the books are available on the OLRC website at http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Resc/Trade/index.html

Lesson 1 - Introduction to Slavery Unit

Description:

After reading From Slave Ship to Freedom Road by J. Lester and R. Brown, learners will communicate in small groups regarding issues surrounding the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

Learning Objectives:

- Learners will engage in a discussion web strategy using a graphic organizer.
- Learners will adopt two different points of view regarding the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 to enhance comprehension.

EFF Skills and Topics:

General Skills:	Topics:
Read with understanding	Community member role
Cooperate with others	Reading
Resolve conflict and negotiate	Social studies
Convey ideas in writing	Life skills
Speak so others can understand	
Listen actively	
Reflect and evaluate	

Learning Activity:

1. Intro. - Teacher or students will read From Slave Ship to Freedom Road.
2. Modeling—
   - Teacher will introduce and model the Discussion Web activity (see Appendix A) with the whole class using pgs. 28-29 from the text and posing the question "Should the slave owner sell Delilah in order to keep the plantation running?"
   - Students will offer answers and justifications to yes/no responses. (e.g. "No, because it's important to keep a family together." Or "Yes, because the plantation has to make money so that other slaves will have enough to eat.")
   - The class will take a vote on the conclusion after several yes and no justifications are listed.
3. Collaborative Learning – Pairs of learners will work through a Discussion Web on the question, "Due to the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, it is now illegal to assist slaves escaping to freedom. You are a white Christian working on the Underground Railroad network. Should you continue to help slaves escape to freedom now that you are risking your own freedom?"
4. Each pair will orally share their conclusions with the rest of the class.
5. Lesson extension – Journal writing – Using pages 36-37 of the text and what we've discussed about slavery, look at the faces of the slaves now that they have been given freedom. Why do some of them look apprehensive and afraid? Or use a Discussion Web to reason through both sides of a conflict in your life. This strategy can be excellent for weighing "pros" and "cons" in decision making.

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Lesson 2

Description:

- After reading From Slave Ship to Freedom Road by J. Lester and R. Brown, learners will create a Series-of-Events-Chain on chart paper.

Learning Objectives:

- Learners will create a Series-of-Events-Chain (including a time-line component), sequencing the events in the book from the beginning of slavery in America through Emancipation.
- Learners will continue to fill in events (with dates) discovered in other books during the rest of this unit of study.

EFF Skills and Topics:

General Skills:	Topics:
Read with understanding	Worker role
Plan	Language arts
Cooperate with others	Writing
Take responsibility for learning	Reading
Convey ideas in writing	Social studies
Speak so others can understand	Mathematics
Listen actively	Life skills
Observe critically	Employability skills
Use math in problem solving and communication	
Solve problems and make decisions	
Reflect and evaluate	

Learning Activity:

1. Discuss the title of the book (from… to…). What does that imply? Discuss sequence of events – helps with comprehension, writing, and planning.
2. Invite students to talk with a partner to share examples of how sequencing impacts daily life (ex. applying for a job – 1st find out about the job, send cover letter and resume, follow up with a phone call, go to interview, send thank-you note. Or practice sequence with following a recipe)
3. Collaborative learning- have students work in pairs to create a series-of-events-chain on chart paper, referencing the book as needed.
4. Whole class – compare and contrast different groups' charts.
5. Lesson extension- Journal assignment: Encourage learners to create a series- of- events-chain in their journals about something that happened in their life (pregnancy), a plan of action or goal they'd like to organize (get GED, go to nurse's aid training, work at a hospital), or an example from another content area (science – life cycle of butterfly).

Lesson 3

Description:

After reading segments of Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs by M. Lyons, learners will "become" a character from the book and write a journal entry *as if* they are that character.

Learning Objectives:

- Learners will increase comprehension and thinking skills via writing a historical character journal entry.
- Learners will develop a class rubric to determine the qualities of good writing so they can evaluate each others' articles with a "3 on a wall" activity.

EFF Skills and Topics:

General Skills:	Topics:
Use information and communication technology	Worker role
Read with understanding	Language arts
Advocate and influence	Writing
Guide others	Reading
Take responsibility for learning	Social studies
Convey ideas in writing	Life skills
Observe critically	
Reflect and evaluate	

Learning Activity:

1. Discuss if anyone keeps a personal journal (connect to importance of literacy skills).
2. Discuss "unsent letters" and compare that to the "letters" Harriet writes in her journal. Also discuss "writing to a specific audience" – Harriet writes to her mom, dad, etc.
3. Encourage learners to choose a character from the book and "collect" information from the text that will answer the following questions: How old is your character? Married? Have kids? Where / with whom does your character live? Work? Do for fun? Is your character religious? How does your character feel about slavery? How much education does your character have?
4. Using the "evidence" from the text, pretend you are your character and write a journal entry or unsent letter from the character's perspective.
5. To develop the writing evaluation rubric - Elicit ideas from the class about what makes good writing. Keep track of the ideas on an overhead. Also share GED essay evaluation criteria (write clearly, make a main point, support your ideas). As a class, agree on and develop a rubric to evaluate writing (for self-evaluation or peer evaluation).
6. When students are finished with their journal article, make 3 copies of each for "3 on a wall" peer writing evaluations. Hang all the copies up on the wall and ask learners to circulate and choose three pieces of writing to evaluate (they cannot choose their own). Have learners use the class-developed rubric to provide feedback on the articles. After the writing is evaluated, feedback is given to the original author. Give learners an opportunity to revise their work after receiving feedback.

Lesson 4

Description:

While reading segments of Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs by M. Lyons, learners will record (self-select) difficult vocabulary words. The words will be compiled into a class list and learners will individually fill out a knowledge rating form about the words. Learners will then work in small groups using context clues and an online

dictionary (if needed) to determine meanings of unknown words, sharing their results with the rest of the class.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will individually analyze what they know (or don't know) about difficult words.
- Students will work in small groups to practice using context clues.
- Students will utilize an on-line dictionary when context clues don't provide enough information. Http://www.wordcentral.com/cgi-bin/Kids

EFF Skills and Topics:

General Skills:	Topics:
Use information and communication technology	Language arts
Read with understanding	Reading
Cooperate with others	Internet use
Take responsibility for learning	
Reflect and evaluate	

Learning Activity:

1. Teacher will compile list of self-selected difficult vocabulary words from the reading.
2. Teacher will model use of context clues with a few words by going back to the text.
3. Learners will individually fill out a Knowledge Rating chart (see Appendix B) for the remaining words with the following categories: "can define"/ "have seen or heard before"/ "no clue".
4. Learners will get into small groups and try to determine meanings of unknown words with context clues. They will record related words or phrases directly from the text that give clues to the meaning.
5. If a group cannot determine meaning via context clues, they can go to the on-line dictionary for further elaboration.
6. At the end of the lesson, learners will share their findings/ compare answers with the rest of the class.

Lesson 5

Description:

Learners will compare and contrast Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth with a Venn Diagram graphic organizer using the books: A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass and A Picture Book of Sojourner Truth by D. Adler.

Learning Objectives:

- Learners will able to compare and contrast qualities of characters to enhance reading comprehension.
- Learners will learn to use a Venn Diagram (see Appendix C) to organize information.

EFF Skills and Topics:

General Skills:	Topics:
Use information and communication technology	Community member role
Read with understanding	Language arts
Plan	Writing
Cooperate with others	Reading
Convey ideas in writing	Social studies
Listen actively	Life skills
Reflect and evaluate	

Learning Activity:

1. Teacher will read one of the books to the whole class to increase interest and motivation. Encourage learners to take notes on important details/events relating to the main character.
2. Learners will read the second book in pairs (taking notes).
3. Teacher will model how to use a Venn Diagram with some of the details on chart paper or an overhead projector.
4. In pairs– learners will add their information to their own copies of a Venn Diagram.
5. As a whole class– teacher will lead a discussion summarizing information found in the groups– filling in a "class summary" version of the Venn Diagram on the chart paper or overhead.
6. Individually– learners will use the information gathered on the Venn Diagram to create compare/ contrast paragraphs on a word processor.

Lesson 6

Description:

This lesson will be used as the culminating project for the slavery unit of study. It will include reading selections from Virginia Hamilton's Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom; using a K-W-L chart to organize research questions and prior knowledge; researching with books, CD-ROMs and the Internet; creating a Microsoft Word document with clipart, wordart, and a written summary; and making an oral presentation.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will use K-W-L (see Appendix D) to organize content information.
- Students will use the Internet, books, and CD-ROMs to gather information relating to their chosen topic.
- Students will create a Microsoft Word document using:
  - at least one picture (clip art or a picture cut and pasted from Internet)
  - written summary of information found
  - at least one example of WordArt from Microsoft Word
- Students will create a list of at least 5 references used.
- Students will orally present their project to the class.

EFF Skills and Topics:

General Skills:	Topics:
Use information and communication technology	Worker role
Read with understanding	Language arts
Plan	Writing
Take responsibility for learning	Reading
Convey ideas in writing	Social studies
Speak so others can understand	Life skills
Learn through research	Employabil[illegible] skills
Reflect and evaluate	

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Learning Activity:

1. Learners will use a project planning sheet (K-W-L, see Appendix D) after they have selected the character or event they want to research (from Many Thousand Gone or other previously read texts). This will help to identify questions they need to answer via their research.
2. Learners can utilize books previously used in the unit (or others), a CD ROM encyclopedia, and various Internet sites:
   - http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/tguide/4tgfocus.html (Africans in America)
   - http://www.itsnet.com/home/getlost/explore.html (slave narratives)
   - http://www.nps.gov/undergroundrr/contents.htm (underground railroad)
   - http://www.afroam.org/history/slavery/main.html (black resistance)
   - http://160.79.207.23/blackhistory/fnsotrue.html (profiles of famous 18th century African Americans)
   - http://www.historychannel.com (search history channel info.)
3. Learners can use meta-search engines to locate other sources:
   - http://www.metacrawler.com
   - http://www.askjeeves.com
4. Learners will compile information and write a summary on the word processor. They will use at least one picture graphic and one piece of WordArt in their document.
5. Learners will present their project to the whole class. Teacher can provide a guideline for the oral presentation: Who/what was your topic, why did you pick that topic, where did you find info., talk about 3 of your most interesting findings.

The lessons in this unit can work well individually or as a complete thematic unit. The level of difficulty can easily be adapted based on the abilities of the learners in your classroom. This unit utilized only a handful of the quality tradebooks available on slavery or the Civil War. The OLRC Reading Group has reviewed many other tradebooks that would be excellent additions to this unit. See Appendix E for a matrix listing recommended books on these topics.

Appendix A

Discussion Web
The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850

Yes

Due to the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, it is now illegal to assist slaves escaping to freedom. You are a white Christian working in the Underground Railroad network. Should you continue to help slaves escape to freedom now that you are risking your own freedom?

No

Conclusion:

Knowledge Rating Grid

How much do you know about these words?

	Individually (check the box)			In groups	
	Can Define	Have seen / heard	No clue?!?	Text clues (words / phrases)	On-line dictionary help? (yes / no)
schooner 6					
wharf 7					
buoys 11					
anxious 11					
stingy 12					
pantaloons 14					
heroic 14					
muslin 14					
shilling 17					
revolution 18					
croup 21					

* note: numbers next to words are page numbers

Appendix C

Venn Diagram: Frederick Douglas and Sojourner Truth

Appendix D

Project Planning Sheet – Slavery in America

Subject of Internet Inquiry project (person or event)

_____

K-W-L (know, want to know, learned)

What I already **know** about _____

What I **want to know** about _____
(This is the GOAL of your project – to find information List questions below about events or people you want to learn more about)

What I **learned** about _____
(keep track of information from books, Internet sites, or CD-ROMs and *list the source* – name and author or web address - next to the information)

Civil War and Slavery Books

Author	Title	Type*	Difficulty **	Setting	Heroes	Slavery	Civil War	Abolition	Underground Railroad	Other
Adler	A Picture Book of Frederick Douglas	P / Bio	Easy	North and South U.S.	X	X				
Adler	A Picture Book of Sojourner Truth	P / Bio	Easy	New York State	X	X				
Banks	Abraham's Battle	YA / Fic	Difficult	Gettysburg			X			
Beatty	Jayhawker	YA / Fic	Difficult	Kansas	X		X	X		
Berry	Ajeemah and His Son	YA / Fic	Difficult	Africa and Jamaica		X				
Bial	The Underground Railroad	NF / Photo	Medium	Ohio, North and South U.S.		X			X	
Blos	A Gathering of Days	YA / Fic	Difficult	Rural New England		X				Journal
Chang	A Separate Battle: Women and the Civil War	YA / Variety	Difficult	North and South U.S.	X	X	X	X		Vintage photographs
Everett	John Brown: One Man Against Slavery	P / Fic	Easy	Harper's Ferry, VA	X			X		
Fleischman	The Borning Room	YA / Fic	Difficult	Ohio		X			X	
Fleischman	Bull Run	YA / Fic	Difficult	North and South U.S.			X			Points of view
Forrester	Sound the Jubilee	YA / Fic	Difficult	Nag's Head		X	X			
Freedman	Lincoln: A Photobiography	NF / Bio	Difficult	U.S.	X	X	X	X		
Gauch	Thunder at Gettysburg	P / Fic	Easy	Gettysburg			X			Children and war
Hamilton	Anthony Burns	YA / Fic	Difficult	Virginia and Boston, MA		X		X		Fugitive Slave Act
Hamilton	Many Thousand Gone	YA / NF	Medium	North & South U.S.	X	X			X	
Hamilton	The People Could Fly	YA	Difficult	Southern U.S.		X				Black Folktales
Haskins	Black, Blue and Gray: African Americans in the Civil War	YA / NF	Difficult	North and South U.S.			X			Authentic Photos
Hopkinson	Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt	P / Fic	Easy	Southern Plantation		X			X	
Johnson	Now Let Me Fly	P / Fic	Easy	Africa & U.S.		X				Emancipation

Civil War and Slavery Books

Author	Title	Type*	Difficulty **	Setting	Heroes	Slavery	Civil War	Abolition	Underground Railroad	Other
Johnston	The Wagon	Fic	Easy	Carolina plantation		X				Emancipation
Lawrence	Harriet and the Promised Land	P / Bio / Poetry	Easy	Maryland & Northern U.S.		X			X	
Lester	From Slave Ship to Freedom Road	P	Medium	Africa, Southern U.S.		X	X			Narrative paintings
Lester	Long Journey Home	YA / Fic	Difficult	South U.S., Ohio	X	X				
Lincoln	The Gettysburg Address	P / NF	Easy	Gettysburg			X			Speeches
Lyons	Letters from a Slave Girl	YA / Fic	Difficult	North Carolina		X				Harriet Jacobs
McCurdy	Escape from Slavery: The Boyhood of Frederick Douglas in His Own Words	YA / NF / Bio	Difficult	North U.S.	X	X				
McGovern	Wanted Dead or Alive: The True Story of Harriet Tubman	P / Bio	Easy	North & South U.S.		X			X	
McKissack, P & McKissack, F	Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters	P / Fic	Medium	Southern Plantation		X				
Murphy	The Boys' War	YA / NF / Bio	Difficult	North & South U.S.			X			Authentic photos
Myers	At Her Majesty's Request	YA / NF / Bio	Difficult	Africa & England		X				Letters and photos
Paterson	Jip: His Story	YA / Fic	Difficult	New England		X				Fugitive Slave Act
Paulsen	Nightjohn	YA / Fic	Medium	South U.S.		X				Literacy
Pinkney	Dear Benjamin Banneker	P / Bio	Medium	Maryland	X	X				
Polacco	Pink and Say	P / Fic	Medium	Georgia			X			Race relations
Schroeder	Carolina Shout	P / Poetry	Easy	South Carolina						"shouts"
Schroeder	Minty	P / Fic / Bio	Easy	South U.S.	X	X			X	Harriet Tubman
Wesley	Freedom's Gifts	P / Fic	Medium	Texas, NY City		X				Juneteenth
Wright	Jumping the Broom	P / Fic	Easy	Southern Plantation		X				Weddings

* P = Picture book
YA = Young adult book
Bio = Biography
Fic = Fiction
NF = Nonfiction

** Easy = Level 1
Medium = Level 2
Difficult = GED-level